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THE LITERATURE OF RECONSTRUCTION*

The war is over and reconstruction begins giving rise to problems quite as important as the issues over which millions of men have fought since August, 1914. No matter what the terms of the peace treaty are, whether it secures restitution, security for the future, a settlement that promises to be lasting, and a League of Nations, there will be peace without victory unless reconstruction leads to freedom. The war was fought partly to make the world safe for democracy; its outcome will not be satisfactory unless democracy is made safe for the individual. That is the task which now confronts the world.

In the United States the problem is looked upon largely as involving a simple change from a war to a peace basis; of resuming business as usual; of reestablishing the *status quo ante bellum*; and the transition period, feared by all European nations and particularly by Germany, is not expected to be serious. This is only natural because our participation in the war was not sufficiently prolonged and did not require enough sacrifices either to make economic readjustment a revolutionary process or to shadow by death the future life of every family. This is not to say that all the resources of America in men and material were not pledged to the winning of the war. They were; but in England women in industry are numbered by the millions while ours are numbered by the hundred-thousands. England suffered from hunger and cold while we put up with temporary inconveniences. She mortgaged all her resources while ours have barely been scratched. Her hospitals and cathedrals were bombed while we were only slightly worried by submarines off

**Britain After the Peace*. By Brougham Villiers. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1918, pp. 249.

American Problems of Reconstruction. Edited by Elisha M. Friedman. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1918, pp. xxvi, 494.

Readings in the Economics of War. Edited by J. Maurice Clark and others. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918, pp. xxxi, 676.

Americanized Socialism. By James MacKaye. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1918, pp. viii, 191.

the coast. She sent every available soldier to the front while we could comb our man-power with great regard for dependency and industrial claims. And finally, her casualties for six weeks of heavy fighting are hardly equalled by our total losses. It is this personal sacrifice, universal in England and only occasional in the United States, that is most important. There is little wonder, then, that England was more consecrated to the war than the United States and that reconstruction is looked upon as involving a spiritual principle rather than a simple economic readjustment. No one in England would desire, were it possible, simply to go back to the conditions of 1914; they are gone forever. In the uncharted future will be gained or lost the complete fruits of the military victory won at such a great cost.

For the men who come back from the front will be fully determined to have greater political privileges and economic opportunities than any democracy has ever yet vouchsafed its citizens, and there is equally the determination in England among those who have stayed at home that men who have breathed the free air of common sacrifice must not be forced to return to the stuffy atmosphere of self-interest: that England must be made a nobler and better place for them; that political and economic principles must be tested and revised to insure that reconstruction shall mean the greatest possible measure of liberty and happiness to the individual and that finally, the *Machtpolitik* which the armies of freedom have combatted in all quarters of the world shall not again be permitted in the fierce competitive individualism that, before the war, was common not only to England but to all modern democracies. Reconstruction viewed thus would purify England, eliminate what was bad, invigorate what was good, and a true renaissance would establish the British Empire more firmly and completely on the moral basis of freedom.

On the other face of the shield can be read unmistakable warnings that this must be done. The war brought into prominence three great ideals and for them millions of men have suffered. A league of free nations—the realization of the ideal that the war just finished has been a war against war and that

the world is safe for peace-loving people—is within our grasp if we choose to take it. Germany's vision of world hegemony, of a vast *Mittel-Europa* that she would dominate, has been shattered, but in defeat the peoples of the Central Powers, like those of Russia, will likely suffer far more from democratic excesses than they would have done from the success of hostile armies. These two ideals are widely different, but the tyranny is the same. The leaven of democracy has had results; but instead of enjoying a rebirth of freedom, Russia and now Germany have been plunged into abysses from which they will emerge only at a cost comparable to that incurred while they were carrying on hostilities. The menace to other nations, if not so immediate and challenging, is nevertheless grave. How far will Bolshevism spread before it is conquered? The terrible sufferings of four years, the tempered spirit of France, and the wine of victory have strengthened her further to resist. But will she always? England's long-cherished liberal institutions will make her problems less acute, but there is the danger that the economic materialists will look upon reconstruction solely as a question of reestablishing industry and securing a larger share of the trade of the world and will pay no regard to the heritage of freedom that is essentially the ideal for which Britons fought and died. Reconstruction, if it is to suffice, must dedicate the country to freedom; it must mean a new birth of happiness and of a patriotism learned in the trenches, based on fellowship and love, and thus immune to the germs of revolution.

This is the keynote of Mr. Villiers' book, one of the most thoughtful of the many English volumes on reconstruction. The publishers have done a real service by bringing out an American edition. The very interesting selections in *Readings in the Economics of War* give an excellent background for the study of all the problems of reconstruction; writers like Mr. Villiers and Mr. Mackaye interpret this material. The latter has his own particular panacea and in a rather thoughtful little book he applies socialistic principles to the details of "American Tory economic institutions"—radically, dogmatically, and meticulously. It is only by striving after utopias that any progress is secured, but Mr. MacKaye's particular utopia would destroy as

well as improve. Mr. Villiers, on the other hand, sets forth no schemes. Reconstruction, he believes, must be revolution; and he desires it to come by peaceful means. Problems of demobilization, industrial control, taxation, agricultural reform and small holdings, the probable effects of the war on foreign policy of the future—these are the subjects he discusses. What he says is sane and constructive and his book is an admirable introduction to a more detailed study of after-the-war problems.

In the United States, courage and vision are less necessary than in England, but are nevertheless important. *Laissez-faire* and *Machtpolitik* must alike be discarded as guiding principles of statecraft; liberties given up for the duration of the war must be restored; we must try to prolong and to dedicate to new and national purposes the moral forces which pledged our resources to securing a better internationalism. They have checked a menace; they must go on and secure a better future. American losses have been sufficient to justify, even if they do not make inevitable, a new spirit; lives were not given for the old but for the new America that it is within our power to make. Nor shall we be without specific, difficult problems. Industry must go from a war to a peace basis; three million men must be absorbed in various trades and professions. We may be in for a period of unemployment and perhaps acute depression. The industrial system in the United States is not so perfect that the germs of Bolshevism may not find lodging places, and it behooves us to be awake. Conscription has made a vital difference. Had the voluntary system been adhered to, national obligations would not have been so great. The State demanded the men it chose and sent them to Europe; it cannot deny them a fair measure of freedom and happiness.

Some of these questions are discussed in *American Problems of Reconstruction*. The papers, ably edited by Mr. Friedman, are of unequal merit, but the volume is one which must be studied by all students of the after-the-war situation. Sincerity and authority are guaranteed by the names of the authors, all of whom are well known; public officials, business men, journalists, and college professors contribute papers on subjects with which they are most familiar: economic questions, efficiency in

production, adjustments in trade and finance, and fiscal reform—these are the problems with which the book deals. Complete information is given as to the temporary and permanent effects of the war, the proper method of readjustment to peace conditions and the probable and desirable changes in our national life. If Mr. Friedman's volume may be said to have a general fault it is one common to most American writers—the problem is looked upon as one of *readjustment*, rather than *reconstruction*.

The test is more than this. Shall the United States be worthy of the sacrifices that have been made for its honor and international safety? The compulsion is not so great as in the case of European democracies. Our losses have not been so severe. The menace from crimes committed in the name of democracy is not so imminent. But, had it been necessary, the United States would have passed through any ordeal; personal suffering, no matter how universal and keen, would not have weakened its will. The country was pledged to victory; that it did not need to endure consecration by the blood of countless sons may make the spirit of reconstruction less compelling, but the opportunities are just as great, and England can once more be our teacher.

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